



Evaluation of the Connecticut Judicial Branch's Three Court-Mandated Family Violence Programs: FVEP, EXPLORE, and EVOLVE

Stephen M. Cox, Ph.D, Professor

Pierre Rivolta, Ph.D, Assistant Professor

Institute for the Study of Crime and Justice
Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice
Central Connecticut State University



Legislative Mandate – Public Act 13-247

An Act Implementing Provisions of the State Budget

Sec. 53 (a) ...shall assess the effectiveness of programs maintained by [CCSD] with respect to family violence...

...such assessment shall consider findings from the Pew-MacArthur Results First Initiative's cost-benefit analysis model [to] determine whether any program changes may be implemented to improve the cost-effectiveness of such programs.



2012 Family Violence Incidents

Since 1987, Connecticut has averaged between 19,000 and 21,000 incidents of family violence leading to an arrest.

In 2012:

- There were **19,804** family violence arrest incidents.
- These incidents involved **41,393** people.
 - 17,411 victims
 - 16,073 offenders
 - 7,909 people identified as victims and offenders

CCDAV estimates there are over **50,000** family violence victims per year



Judicial Branch's FV Programs - FVEP

FVEP (Family Violence Education Program)

- Pre-trial program
- Males and Females
- Referral through Family Services and Court orders
- Meets for 9 weeks, once a week for 1.5 hours per session
- Available in all court locations
- 4,946 cases were referred to the FVEP in 2011



Judicial Branch's FV Programs - EXPLORE

EXPLORE

- Post-conviction (can be used as pre-trial in courts with domestic violence dockets)
- Males only
- Court orders and probation referrals
- Meets for 26 weeks, once a week for 1.5 hours per session
- Was available in only 13 court locations but was expanded to all court locations in 2012
- 1,439 cases were referred to EXPLORE in 2011



Judicial Branch's FV Programs - EVOLVE

EVOLVE

- ❑ Post-conviction (can be used as pre-trial in courts with domestic violence dockets)
- ❑ Males only
- ❑ Court orders and probation referrals
- ❑ Meets for 26 weeks, twice a week for 2 hours per session
- ❑ Is available in Bridgeport, New Haven, New London, Norwich, and Waterbury court locations
- ❑ 622 cases were referred to EVOLVE in 2011



Research Reviews of FV Programs

- Inconsistent conclusions regarding program effectiveness
 - Post program arrest rates range from 3% to 69%
- Experts do not agree on the most effective approaches to treat domestic violence offenders
- Methodologically sound studies find the smallest effects
- Only consistent conclusion is the need for more rigorous evaluation research of domestic violence programs



Pew Foundation's Evaluation Standards

Most important requirement is to have two equal groups of offenders:

- one who received the treatment
- one who did not receive the treatment

Random assignment

- Gold standard for evaluation research
- Randomly assigns offenders to a treatment or control group
- Difficult to use in criminal justice research

Propensity score matching (PSM)

- Statistical technique that controls for selection bias to create two study groups
- One who received the treatment
- One who did not receive the treatment but is statistically identical to the treatment group

Data and Method

Secondary analysis of data using:

- **Court records** – demographics, arrest dates, conviction dates, charges, dispositions, court orders, victim information, domestic violence risk assessment scores (DVSI-R)
- **Criminal histories** – prior arrests, prior convictions, prior prison sentences
- **Program records** – number of times enrolled in the program, intake date, discharge date, discharge reason

Data were collected on all arrests and subsequent charges for family violence offenses occurring in the calendar year 2010 (n=31,052).

Following the collection of arrest records, we used program records to determine which offenders had been court-ordered and attended EVOLVE, EXPLORE, or FVEP.



FV Program Study Group Summary

| | FVEP | EXPLORE | EVOLVE |
|-------------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Number in Study Group | 3,114 | 788 | 185 |
| % Male | 71% | 100% | 100% |
| Average Age | 33 yrs old | 34 yrs old | 32 yrs old |
| % White | 46% | 41% | 29% |
| % African-American | 28% | 29% | 37% |
| % Hispanic | 25% | 29% | 32% |
| Number of Prior Arrests | 3 | 7 | 8 |
| % DVSI-R High Risk | 29% | 68% | 74% |

Program Outcomes and Arrests

| | FVEP | EXPLORE | EVOLVE |
|------------------------|------|---------|--------|
| Completion Rate | 84% | 68% | 64% |
| 12 Month Arrest Rates* | | | |
| Program Completers | 21% | 23% | 29% |
| Program Non-Completers | 48% | 45% | 46% |
| PSM Comparison Group | 36% | 51% | 55% |

*The outcome measure is any new arrest



Program Effect Sizes

The Pew Foundation requires the reporting of effect sizes to be used for cost-benefit analysis.

Program effect sizes provide estimates of how much a program is able to change the outcomes of its participants compared to a similar group who did not attend the program.

Effect sizes allow for the comparison of effects across multiple programs to determine whether some programs are more or less effective than others.

We reported two different types of effect sizes but will only present one here (the most easy to interpret).



Odds Ratios to Show Program Effects

Odds Ratios show the likelihood that the comparison group will be re-arrested for any new offense compared to treatment group.

| | All Participants | Program Completers |
|---------|------------------|--------------------|
| FVEP | 1.6 | 2.1 |
| EXPLORE | 2.4 | 3.5 |
| EVOLVE | 2.3 | 3.0 |

FVEP program completers were 2.1 times less likely to be arrested than similar offenders who never went to FVEP.

EXPLORE had the largest effect of the three programs.



Study Conclusions

- Each program had completion rates similar to or higher than other domestic violence programs.
- Program participants and especially program completers were significantly less likely to be arrested after program discharge than offenders in the comparison group.
- The calculated effect sizes demonstrated that these programs were effective at reducing recidivism. EXPLORE had the highest effect sizes followed by EVOLVE and FVEP.



Recommendations for Research and Policy

Research Recommendations

- Conduct 18-24 month follow-up period on current groups
- Study the effects of these programs on victims' lives

Legislative Recommendations

- Continued legislative support for the FVEP, EXPLORE, and EVOLVE programs
- All non-Judicial family violence programs be grounded in evidence-based practices (Connecticut is only 1 of 6 states that have no guiding policies for family violence programs)
- Mandate all non-Judicial family violence programs be state-certified and prohibit the substitution of alternative approaches to family violence treatment in lieu of state-certified programming.



For a copy of the summary report or full report, please contact:

Stephen M. Cox, Ph.D.

coxs@ccsu.edu

860-832-3138

Pierre Revolta

pierre.rivolta@ccsu.edu

86-832-2705